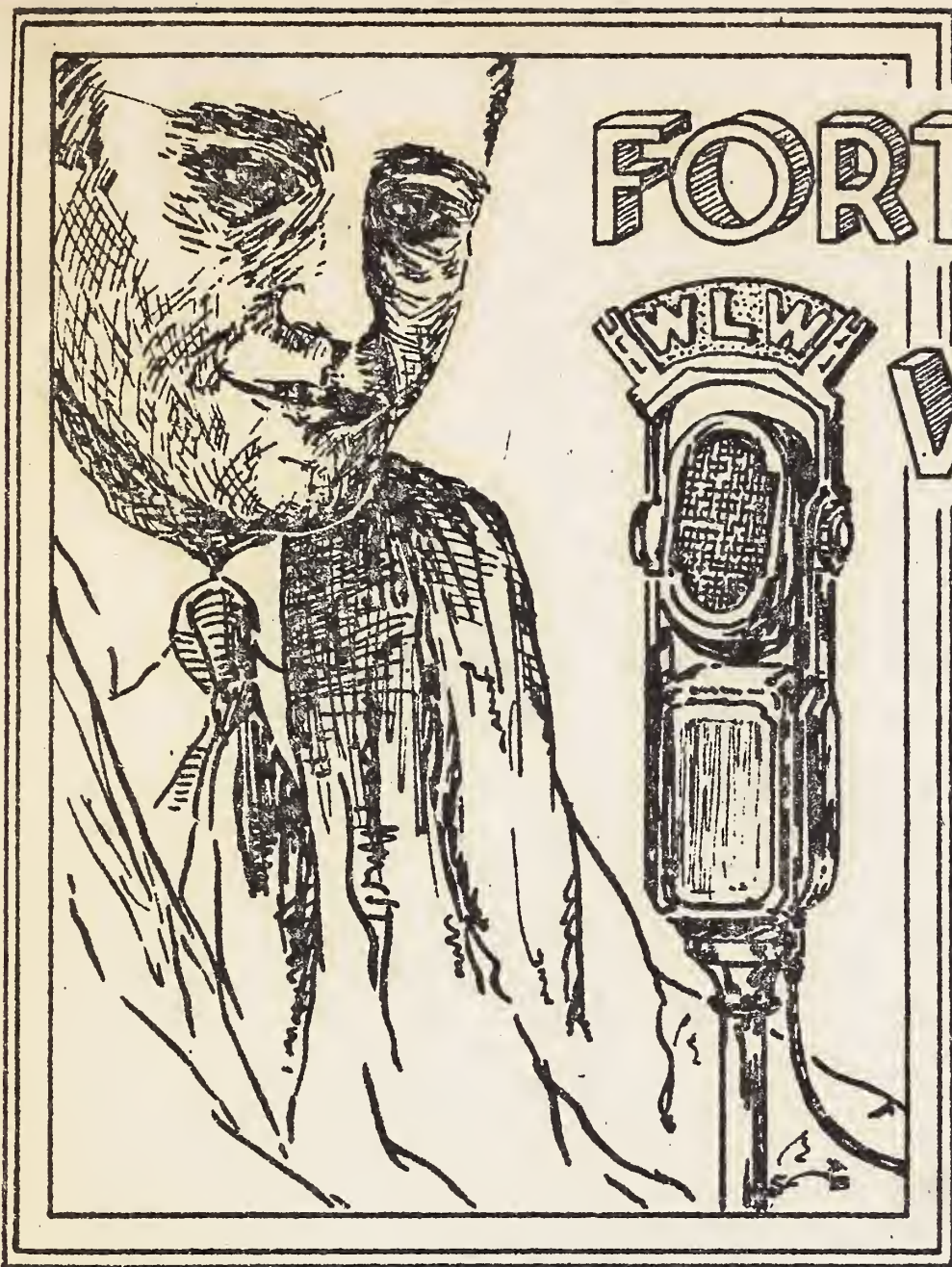


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Anthony



FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

A Series of
Dramatizations
of Better
Land Use

No. 125 September 14, 1940 1:15 p.m.
"STEVE COOLEY -- FARMER"

W·L·W CINCINNATI

United States Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
Dayton · Ohio



SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Ross County, Ohio, is a far cry from the wilderness of a century ago, when many a man chased a deer, hunted the wild Indian over the hills and through the hollows. The trees were breaking down with nuts, then. Early settlers gathered acorns under the white oak trees in incredible quantities. The ground was covered with inches of acorns, nuts, leaf litter that blanketed the soil. There were log cabins with lap-shingle roofs, some of them with one 4-light window (but the neighbors didn't look kindly upon those windows... they were too aristocratic.)

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading...

ANNOUNCER

Agricultural Ross County, as we know it today, is a county composed of men from all walks of life. Such a man is Steve Cooley, a colored man who didn't know how to farm, but had the courage to learn....

NARRATOR (slowly)

Sure. I didn't know much about farming, I still don't. I guess the most farming I ever did before this was when I was down in Georgia, where I was born...my uncle had a farm and I spent a summer with him. I was working up at Columbus a few years ago for a cement company, and it was closing time...

SOUND: Factory whistle blowing....

WORKER

Five o'clock, Steve. Time to quit.

SOUND: Tools tossed aside...

STEVE

Sure. But I still got plenty of work to do.

WORKER

Don't be a sap.

STEVE

Sure. I just want to do my work the right way.

STRAW BOSS (fading in)

Oh, say...Cooley! You don't need to work any more. Didn't you hear the whistle?

STEVE

Sure, but I wanted to finish this job, Mister Fred.

STRAW BOSS

Well, you needn't. Why, I hate to tell you, Steve, but...well, you know how it is...

STEVE

I guess I don't, suh.

STRAW BOSS

Times are bad, Steve, and we're not getting the business we used to. We're going to have to lay off some of the men, and...

STEVE

Me?

STRAW BOSS

Yes, Steve...you're one of them.

STEVE

You mean I'm laid off, starting now?

STRAW BOSS

I guess that's it...but don't worry. You can go on relief.

STEVE

No suh, not me. I don't want to go on relief. 'Course this is kinda sudden...(THEN BRIGHTLY) Maybe I'll get me a farm.

STRAW BOSS

Now, that's not such a bad idea...my folks have a farm down in Ross County, and...(SUDDENLY) what do you know about farming?

STEVE

Nothing. But I can learn.

STRAW BOSS

What'll you use for money? Don't happen to have a rich uncle, do you?

STEVE

No, suh. I reckon maybe I can get somebody to trust me to a farm. I'm strong enough to work a farm...

STRAW BOSS

I'll guarantee you are, and I hope you can get one. I know Mr. Blanchard will give you a recommendation, and I'll sure help you. Good luck to you, Steve...maybe we'll meet again sometime.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading...

NARRATOR

Sure, it looked easy. I managed to get me a couple of pigs, but the prices were down and I didn't make anything on them. Then one day I went down to Chillicothe, and went into a....

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

AGENT (PRACTICALLY IGNORING HIM)

If you're looking for a....

STEVE

I saw your sign.

AGENT

You've the wrong place, buddy. We're not hiring anyone today.
Suppose you...

STEVE

I saw your sign about farms.

AGENT

Oh, farms!

STEVE

Yessuh, I want to buy a farm.

AGENT (CHANGING HIS TUNE)

Oh, why...my good man, sit down here...now just what kind...

STEVE

I'd just as soon stand.

AGENT

As you like. Now, if you'd like a farm, I can show you several...

STEVE

Yessuh.

AGENT

You're from these parts, I take it?

STEVE

No suh, I'm from Georgia, but raised up at Columbus.

AGENT (WITH SUDDEN EXUBERANCE)

Well, sir, you're in the land of fertility, the very land of fertility. The bottomlands of the Scioto and Paint Creek are famous for their abundant crops of corn...no better in these United States, no sir.

STEVE

How about the hills?

AGENT

Oh, the hills. (LAUGHING) Sure, we have a few hills, sure...some farms on 'em. But this is farming country....why, have you heard of our cattle?

STEVE

I heard they were pretty good.

AGENT (laughing)

Pretty good! Why, once we sent some cattle to the Kentucky State Fair...and they took the prize over those luscious-fleshed animals from the famed bluegrass region. Oh, I remember the stories they tell of this land, "the richness of the country, the beauty of the birds and flowers, the softness of the climate, the fragrance of the atmosphere, redolent as Eden..."

STEVE

Sounds awful good, but you see...

AGENT

Why, Daniel Webster once climbed Mount Logan, and looked out over this bountiful region. The beauty and fertility, the immense fields of corn and wheat, the fat luscious cattle in this vast domain--it impressed him--although I may say, that he frequently blundered (COUGHS AHEM) by calling Paint Creek Pain (but that's neither here nor there)...and in the southern part...

STEVE

Trouble is, mister...I don't have much money.

AGENT

Money! Ha! Ha! You don't...(SUDDENLY SYMPATHETIC)...you don't have much money.

STEVE

Sure. That's it. I'd like to get a farm, though. My old straw boss up at Columbus, Mister Fred, has some folks that have a farm down here.

AGENT

What's your name?

STEVE

Steve.

AGENT

Steve what?

STEVE

Steve Cooley. I just want to get a farm.

AGENT

Can you work?

STEVE

I always have. I never had no complaints. Look here, mister, look at them muscles...why, I could...here, let me show you.

AGENT (SCREAMING WITH PAIN)

Never mind! Ouch! Why you big ox, you nearly...

STEVE

Gee, I'm awful sorry. I just meant to show you what...

AGENT (LAUGHING NERVOUSLY)

You showed me. But what I meant was, Steve...that's the name, isn't it?

STEVE

Sure.

[illegible]

Journal of Management Studies, 19(1), 67-80.

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AGENT

I know a farm up here on Potts Hill, just outside Bainbridge. You can get it for practically nothing, and it's worth just about that. It's a worn-out farm, Steve...but you can't be too particular. Do you want it?

STEVE

Sure.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

NARRATOR

I got that farm, and let me tell you, it was a sight. When I first came up there, I couldn't see anything but a bunch of gullies and a wagonload of mash. But I was right proud of that farm, and I figured I could make something of it. And this summer...

SOUND: Car coming to standstill, brakes applied...

STRAW BOSS (shouting)

Hey fellow!

STEVE (off)

Yessuh.

STRAW BOSS

Which way to Bainbridge? I'm plumb lost in these hills.

STEVE (fading in)

Why, you just keep on this road, and stay to the left all the time. You can't miss it, Mister Fred.

STRAW BOSS

Say...how'd you know my name?

STEVE

Don't you remember Steve Cooley, who used to work for you in Columbus?

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STRAW BOSS

Why, Steve! After all these years...

STEVE

Sure.

STRAW BOSS

And so you finally got a farm!

STEVE

Sure.

STRAW BOSS

Well, tell me all about yourself! I'm not in that big a hurry.

SOUND: Motor cut off...

STEVE

It's been plenty of work, Mister Fred. I had to start from scratch, but I figured that was the way the first settlers did when they came to Ross County.

STRAW BOSS

Yes, I've heard my grandfather talk about those days. Why, when they got here, they just knocked out the furniture from the woods..., even the dishes were made from wood. And every man made his own house, his own shoes, plows, harrows...

STEVE

That's pretty near what I did.

STRAW BOSS

Why, if a farmer in those days wanted a harrow, he hunted out a forked tree, cut it, dressed the fork, bored holes in it, drove in the wooden teeth, and dragged it himself.

STEVE

Well, if they could do it, I reckon I can. I laid out my own terraces, and built them myself with a one-horse plow...and I didn't even have a horse you could call a horse. But I got some nice terraces, and they sure stop the soil washing. Mister Fred, you ought to have seen this farm.

STRAW BOSS

Was it that bad?

STEVE

Bad! The buzzards wouldn't even hang around. The fellow before me had run his rows up and down the hill, and that one field over there wouldn't even grow grass. I put a lot of manure on it, and built the terraces, and now it's just doing fine.

STRAW BOSS

Where'd you get the idea of terracing? It isn't very common in Ross County.

STEVE

I'd seen how they work in Georgia, and I always was pretty handy with a level. So I just built 'em...I didn't want any part of soil washing on my farm.

ORGAN: Sneak in AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL.

Well, Steve...about all I can say is...you're doing a fine job of farming. The work that you are doing away up in these hills, Steve...will be reflected in the towns and cities of Ross County. The cities reflect the farms. If the farms prosper, the cities prosper. And America needs more good farmers like you, Steve Cooley.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of Steve Cooley, of Ross County, Ohio...
an energetic colored man who is farming with a conservation pattern
And now, once again we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of
the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing
Jones.

JONES

Thanks, _____. You have to visit the Cooley farm to
appreciate what the man has been up against, and what he is doing.
His corn is grown on steep hillsides, and it's just about as good
as that grown on the bottomlands of Paint Creek. The answer,
Steve Cooley will tell you, is the soil and moisture saved by the
terraces. He is growing velvet beans...something of a rarity in
Ohio...and he'll tell you that they make twice as much hay as
soybeans, as well as build up the soil. He's growing almost
everything he needs--even sunflowers for his chickens. He has his
woodlot, and finally a horse "that he can call a horse." The
point is, _____, that here is a man without a lot of
money, without a lot of technical knowledge, or even farming
knowledge..without outside help of any kind, who has taken an
eroded farm and built it up, all on his own initiative. You
can't help but admire him for it.

SOUND: Telegraph key clicking...

ANNOUNCER

News in the conservation world!

JONES

From Louisville, Kentucky, comes word that John Hull, special assistant to the general agent of the Farm Credit Administration, is leading a series of farmer tours of soil conservation work in Kentucky. The purpose of these tours is to show those farmers how other farmers are saving their soil. Vanderburgh County, Indiana farmers will remember John Hull quite well. He was county agricultural agent until recently, and was responsible, more than any other man, for the formation of Indiana's first soil conservation district. And speaking of soil conservation districts, the Farm and Dairy, a weekly farm journal published in Salem, Ohio, recently editorially endorsed proposed enabling legislation to permit organization of soil conservation districts in Ohio. Ohio, you know, is one of the few states that does not have such legislation.

SOUND: Boom of cannon...

ANNOUNCER

This week we salute!

JONES

This week we salute County Agricultural Agent N. H. Hadley of Parke County, Indiana and the farmers of that county. And, _____, if you'll read what they've done, you'll understand why. Please.

ANNOUNCER

Let's see, Ewing....members of the county land-use planning committee got into a huddle one day, and they started talking about the condition of the land, then and now. There had been a change. Some fields were full of weeds. One school was closed. Roads had deteriorated. Pastures looked worn out. Erosion was increasing. Living standards and conditions were going down in some townships.

These farmers...78 of them to be exact...decided to find out where they were going. So, they made a map...a map showing the lands of their county. This map showed slope, it showed the types of soils, it showed just how the land was being used. They studied that map. They discussed which lands should be used for woods and pastures, which for row crops. And as they studied and planned, each of the 78 farmers gained a greater appreciation of their land.

Willard Singleton, the chairman of the committee, sounded the general keynote when he said that "in my opinion, the most valuable result that can come from land-use planning is to keep from wasting so much energy, and wasting so much land."

W. B. Guthrie had the same idea. "It's just sound business to use this land for what is most efficient."

With that map, those 78 farmers are prepared to go ahead on a sound--soil-conservation program--a program of men working together to save the soil.

JONES

So you see, _____, the farmers of Parke County made more than a map. They made a great step in making people more conscious of the use of this land of ours.

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

JONES (on cue)

This is Ewing Jones, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture...so goodbye until next week at this same time, when we bring you another story of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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